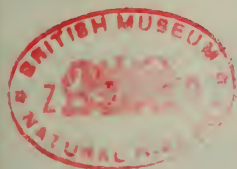


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The six hundred and sixteenth meeting of the Club was held at the Rembrandt Hotel, London, on the 28th April, 1964.

Chairman: Major-General C. B. Wainwright

Members present: 34; guests 6; total 40.

This was preceded by the Annual General Meeting and as the meeting was held a week later than usual, the report of this and the talk given by P. J. K. Burton will appear in the next issue.

Three new birds from Africa

by M. A. TRAYLOR

Received 17th January, 1964

The following three new subspecies of birds were discovered while I was collecting in the Kalabo district of Barotseland, Northern Rhodesia, west of the Zambesi River, and in Ngamiland, on the northern and western edge of the Okavango swamp. The co-ordinates of the localities mentioned are: Liuwa Plain, 14° 36' S., 22° 40' E.; S. Lueti River, 15° 38' S., 22° 06' E.; Sepopa, 18° 47' S., 22° 10' E.

Rhinopomastus aterrimus anomalus subsp. nov.

Type: Chicago Natural History Museum No. 262978, adult male from S. Lueti River on the Angola border, Kalabo district, Barotseland, Northern Rhodesia, collected 29th November, 1961 by M. A. Traylor. Collector's No. 760.

Diagnosis: Differs from all other races in having the bill more slender and wholly black, lacking the pale tomia that are otherwise characteristic of the species. The bill is also somewhat longer than in the adjoining race *anchietae* of Angola, which in other characters it resembles.

Measurements of type: Wing 114; tail 145; bill 39; tarsus 21.5 mm.

Range: Balovale and Kalabo districts of Northern Rhodesia, west of the Zambesi River, from the Lungwebungu River south to the S. Lueti River, and adjoining Angola.

Remarks: As I have noted previously (Traylor, 1960, *Publ. Cult. Co. Diam. Ang.*, Lisboa, 51: 169), *anchietae* is variable within Angola, populations from south of the Cuanza River being larger than those from north. Comparative measurements (mm.) of *anomalus* and the two populations of *anchietae* are:

		Males		
		Wing	Tail	Bill
<i>anomalus</i>	(6)	113-121 (116.0)	145-161 (152.3)	37-39 (38.0)
<i>anchietae</i> —				
south of Cuanza	(4)	115-120 (117.3)	149-162 (154.3)	34, 34, 34
north of Cuanza	(5)	106-111 (108.2)	137, 137, 140	32-37 (33.8)
		Females		
<i>anomalus</i>	(4)	105-109 (106.8)	138, 144	30-31.5 (30.8)
<i>anchietae</i> —				
south of Cuanza	(7)	104-107 (106.0)	130-147 (137.4)	28-29 (28.3)
north of Cuanza	(3)	103, 104, 105	128, 134, 134	28, 29, 30

In wing and tail measurements, *anomalus* is similar to those populations of *anchietae* living south of the Cuanza River, and only differs from them in having a slightly longer bill. However, the shape and colour of the bill are quite distinct. In *anomalus* it is more slender, particularly at the base, the culmen is more arched, and the tomia are black. In *anchietae* and also in the races of *aterrimus* in northern Africa, the tomia are pale horn, giving a quite different appearance. In all those bill characters in which *anomalus* differs from *anchietae*, it shows an approach to the related *R. cyanomelas schalowi* whose range adjoins it to the south.

The species *aterrimus* has only been known from Northern Rhodesia since 1960 when Benson (1960, *B.B.O.C.*, 80: 172) collected two immature males in southern Balovale district, along the Lungwebungu River. I had the opportunity of examining these specimens in the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia in Bulawayo. They are not fully grown so that their measurements are not diagnostic, but they have the wholly black bill of *anomalus* and undoubtedly belong to that form.

South of the range of *anomalus*, *R. cyanomelas schalowi* has been taken at Shangombo on the Mashi River, about 50 miles due south of the type locality. Somewhere in the intervening area the two forms must meet, presumably at the northern edge of the acacia and thorn country to which *cyanomelas* is partial. The relationship between these representative forms, which formerly were kept in different genera, would make an interesting study.

Cisticola chiniana bensoni subsp. nov.

Type: Chicago Natural History Museum No. 263414, adult male from Liuwa plain, Kalabo District, Barotseland, Northern Rhodesia, collected 25th October, 1961 by M. A. Traylor. Collector's No. 138.

Diagnosis: In summer dress, upper parts darker and greyer than *smithersi* of northern Bechuanaland and southern Barotseland; wing distinctly longer. Since *smithersi* itself is a grey race, *bensoni* differs even more strikingly from the adjoining *frater* and *procera*. Similar in size to *fortis*, which occurs as far south as Balovale, but differs strikingly from that race in being much greyer, less ruddy, and in having the upper parts noticeably streaked instead of only mottled. Winter dress unknown.

Measurements of type: Wing 73; tail 66 (mixed S and W); bill 15; tarsus 24 mm.

Range: Known only from the type locality, where it was found in some brushy woods alongside a pan about 25 miles north of Kalabo.

Remarks: Comparative wing measurements of *smithersi* and *bensoni* are:

		♂♂		♀♀
<i>smithersi</i> —Ngamiland	(14)	65–69 (66.6)	(5)	53–57 (55.4)
S. Lueti River	(5)	66–68 (66.8)	(2)	54, 57
<i>bensoni</i>	(3)	70, 73, 73		none available

There is no difference in bill or tarsal measurements between the two races. Tail measurements of birds in summer dress are misleading because pre-nuptial tail moult is irregular, and some of the longer winter rectrices are usually retained.

It is difficult to try to assess either the range or the size of the population of *bensoni*. The only place it was seen around Liuwa plain was in a patch of woods about a mile long and maybe a hundred yards wide that bordered a long, slender pan; the latter was part of the channel of a large river during the rain. Probably because of the proximity of water, the woods here were denser and brushier than the usual patches of open woods around the edge of the plain. The species was not seen elsewhere in the Kalabo district until we were south of the S. Lueti River, and in this case I believe it is truly absent in the intervening country because we made a point of collecting all *Cisticolas*.

The population from the S. Lueti River is intermediate in colour between *bensoni* and *smithersi*, but it is the same size as the latter and I have put it there. It, too, was very local. It was not seen anywhere along the river, but 12 miles south of the river along the Angola border it was abundant where the thorn bush and acacia started. The distribution of this species in Kalabo parallels that of *C. rufilata*; in both cases there was one race in Liuwa plain and a second south of the S. Lueti, the latter in each case being of southern affinities.

Named for Con Benson, whose help in planning my trip and generosity in seconding to me Jali Makawa assured my success.

Ploceus ocularis tenuirostris subsp. nov.

Type: Chicago Natural History Museum No. 263947, adult female from Sepopa, Ngamiland, Bechuanaland Protectorate, 18° 47' S., 22° 10' E., collected 12th February, 1962 by M. A. Traylor. Collector's No. 1517.

Diagnosis: Females differ from females of the adjoining race *crocatus* of Angola and Northern Rhodesia in having a markedly more slender bill, in the reduced black mark through the eye, and in having only a trace of chestnut wash on the throat. Width of bill at base: *tenuirostris*, 3 ♀♀, 6.0, 6.0, 6.1; *crocatus*, 15 ♀♀ 6.7–7.5 (7.2). Males are not known.

Measurements of type: Wing 71; tail 59; bill length 20; bill width 6.0; tarsus 22 mm.

Range: Northern Ngamiland, from Sepopa on the north-west side of the Okavango swamp east to Kabulabula on the Chobe River.

Remarks: Roberts (1935, *Ann. Transv. Mus.*, 16: 173) was the first to recognise that there might be a slender-billed race of *ocularis* on the upper Zambesi. He recorded a male (actually a female according to Prozesky, *in litt.*) from Kabulabula that had a bill much more slender than any other specimen in the Transvaal Museum. The range of this slender-billed form cannot be very extensive; birds from further up the Zambesi in the Kalabo district of Barotseland are normal *crocatus*.

The slenderness of the bill of *tenuirostris* is accentuated because it averages longer as well as being narrower than in *crocatus*. Comparative measurements of females are:

		Bill length	Bill width (at base)
<i>crocatus</i>	(15)	17.5–20 (19.0)	6.7–7.5 (7.2)
<i>tenuirostris</i>	(3)	20, 20, 20.5	6.0, 6.0, 6.1

The species was uncommon in Ngamiland and was only seen at Sepopa. First noticed in early February at a time when a rapid rise in the Okavango River sent the water over the flood plain. At this time there was a major influx of ploceids, *Euplectes orix* and *E. axillaris* appearing in large numbers. The two *Euplectes* were preparing to breed, but the *ocularis* specimens are in worn plumage, and may have already bred.

On variation in the Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* (Sparrman)

by P. A. CLANCEY

Received 14th January, 1964

It is generally conceded, following Grant, *Ibis*, 1915, pp. 430, 431, and Friedmann, *U.S. Nat. Mus. Bull.* No. 208 ("The Honeyguides"), 1955, p. 172, that the Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* (Sparrman), 1777: Great Fish R., near Somerset East, eastern Cape Province, is "remarkably uniform throughout its vast range, no subspecies being recognisable" (Friedmann, *loc. cit.*). A recent study undertaken in the Durban Museum of material preserved in southern African collections shows that such a view is not strictly correct, and that marked size-variation occurs in various parts of the range, which appears to have some definite geographical and perhaps subspecific basis. While specimens currently available from some of the critical areas are too few in number to permit of any breakdown of the species into races at the present juncture, I feel that the findings which have resulted from my researches are of sufficient interest to be now placed on record in the hope that other workers more advantageously placed than I will endeavour to bring together further material.